The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the THESSALONIANS

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. In the earliest extant Greek manuscripts the title of this epistle is simply, *Pros Thessalonikeis B* ("To [the] Thessalonians II"). The considerably lengthened title in the KJV, The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians, is the result of later elaboration.

2. Authorship. Until recent times the Pauline authorship of the epistle has not been seriously questioned. The character of Paul is reflected throughout the epistle. The author's tender regard for his converts (ch. 2:13–17), his commendation of their virtues (chs. 1:3–5; 3:4), the extreme care he uses in pointing out weaknesses, and yet the strong, authoritative nature of his commands (ch. 3:6, 12), all give evidence that the author was Paul. Not until the early part of the 19th century was serious question raised over the Pauline authorship of the section dealing with the "man of sin." It was urged that there is nothing else of such an apocalyptic nature in Paul's other epistles. This fact, however, does not make unreasonable the long-held view that Paul wrote the epistle. Although he nowhere else deals so directly with the apocalyptic, the fact that he did have visions (Acts 22:17–21; 2 Cor. 12:2–4) makes it understandable that he could have written such an apocalyptic passage. The author's treatment of this prophecy, with the earnest solicitude that God's people should not be deceived with respect to the time of the Lord's coming, but be ready for that great event, is definitely Pauline.

The genuineness of the epistle is sustained by strong evidence. Besides being named in the earliest extant lists of the NT canon, the second epistle is referred to or quoted by the same early church writers as is the first epistle (see p. 223). In addition, it seems to have been known by Polycarp (c. A.D. 150; *Epistle of Polycarp to the Phillipians* 11); and Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 150; *Dialogue With Trypho* 32; 110) mentions the "man of sin," as if making reference to Paul's prophecy in 2 Thess. 2:3. Concerning the date of writing see Vol. VI, p. 103.

3. Historical Setting. That the time and place of writing of the second epistle are the same as for the first is evident from the fact that the same three apostles are associated together (see 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1). Paul remained at Corinth only a year and a half on his Second Missionary Tour (see Acts 18:11), and there is no evidence that Silas was associated with him later. The second letter must have been written not more than a few months after the first; consequently their historical backgrounds are in general the same (see p. 223; for a discussion of the date of writing see Vol. VI p. 103). Probably the messenger who bore the first epistle returned and brought information to Paul that there was a feverish, fanatical spirit of unrest spreading among the members at Thessalonica owing to a feeling that the Lord's advent was about to take place. This condition demanded immediate attention. Any delay would be fatal to the best interests of the church, for among these humble Christians were fainthearted ones who were in grave danger of falling a prey to the deceptions of agitators.

4. Theme. In view of the problems at Thessalonica that prompted this letter, one of its first objectives was to assure the humble Christians of that church of their acceptance with the Lord. He insists that he must thank God for the victories won. He notes their

advance in the Christian virtues of faith (2 Thess. 1:3), brotherly love (2 Thess. 1:3; cf. 1 Thess. 4:9, 10), and steadfastness under persecution (2 Thess. 1:4).

Since the second letter says nothing further in regard to the manner of Christ's coming and the resurrection of the righteous dead, the first letter must have succeeded in enlightening the church concerning these matters. In accomplishing this, however, the apostle had emphasized the necessity of being prepared for the great day of the Lord's return, of daily living with the second coming of Christ constantly in view (1 Thess. 5:1–11; cf. Titus 2:11–13). This emphasis upon the second advent seems to have been understood by many as indicating that Paul expected Christ's return almost immediately (see 2 Thess. 2:2). That such was not his meaning he now hastens to explain, reminding his readers that he had taught them in person that the apostasy, followed by the appearance of the antichrist, must first take place (see vs. 2, 3, 5). Paul appeals directly to the unruly idlers, who apparently claimed that work was unnecessary in view of the imminent advent. He had already warned them in his first epistle (1 Thess. 4:11; 5:14), and now he commands and admonishes them in the Lord (2 Thess. 3:12). He urges that the church take disciplinary measures against them, with the objective of reforming them (vs. 14, 15).

Thus the theme of the second epistle, as that of the first, is practical godliness (ch. 1:11, 12). The fainthearted must be comforted and established (ch. 2:17); the agitators must be silenced (ch. 3:12). The church must know of the deceptive work of the great adversary in bringing about the apostasy and the reign of the antichrist, and also of the final overthrow of all the power of Satan (ch. 2:3–12). With the glorious hope of the triumph of God's cause before them, the Thessalonian Christians are urged so to live that they may be accounted worthy of the Lord's calling (ch. 1:11, 12).

5. Outline.

I. Consolation of Persecuted Believers, 1:1–12.
A. Salutation, 1:1, 2.
B. Thanks to God for their spiritual growth, 1:3, 4.
1. Marked advancement in faith and brotherly love, 1:3.
2. Patient endurance in persecution, 1:4.
C. The prospect of judgment and salvation, 1:5–10.
1. Persecuted believers accounted worthy, 1:5.
2. Tribulation recompensed to persecutors, 1:6.
3. Rest from affliction for righteous at the Lord's advent, 1:7.
4. Eternal separation from God of rejectors of His mercy, 1:8, 9.
5. Glorification of Christ in His saints, 1:10.
D. Prayer for the afflicted ones, 1:11, 12.
II. Instruction and Exhortation Regarding the Antichristian Consummation of Evil, 2:1–17.
A. Warning against being led into fanaticism regarding the time of Christ's coming, 2:1–12.
1. Not to be deceived by any means, 2:1, 2.
2. The apostasy and the reign of the man of sin must come first, 2:3, 4.
3. Reminder of previous oral teaching, 2:5.
4. Mysterious work of the adversary, 2:6, 7.
5. The revelation, destiny, and working of the wicked one, 2:8–10.
6. The deluding and damning of those who accept the wicked one, 2:11, 12.
B. Thanksgiving, admonition, and prayer, 2:13–17.

1. Thanks to God for His saving choice of the Thessalonians, 2:13, 14.
2. Admonition to stand fast and hold the truths taught, 2:15.
3. Prayer for comfort and stability, 2:16, 17.

III. Final Requests, Admonitions, and Commands, 3:1–15.

A. Requests for prayer on behalf of the apostles, 3:1, 2.
B. Paul's confidence and petition concerning the Thessalonians, 3:3–5.
C. Commands and exhortations relating to those who walk disorderly, 3:6–15.

1. Command to withdraw from the disorderly, 3:6.
2. The apostles' personal example, 3:7–9.
3. Previous command concerning idleness, 3:10.
4. Present injunctions, 3:11–13.
5. Counsel concerning the obstinate, 3:14, 15.

IV. Closing prayers and salutation, 3:16–18.

A. Prayer for peace, 3:16.
B. Personal salutation, 3:17.
C. Benediction, 3:18.

CHAPTER 1

1 *Saint Paul certifieth them of the good opinion which he had of their faith, love, and patience:* 11 *and therewithal useth divers reasons for the comforting of them in persecution, whereof the chiefest is taken from the righteous judgment of God*.

1. Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus. For comment on this superscription see on 1 Thess. 1:1.

In God our Father. This phrase differs from that in 1 Thess. 1:1 only in the use of the word "our," which stresses the intimate and personal relationship of Paul and his converts to the One whom they worshipped. However, textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of "our."

2. Grace unto you. The customary Pauline benediction (see on Rom. 1:7; cf. 1 Thess. 1:1). Only in the pastoral epistles is the formula varied by the addition of "mercy." The apostle recognizes that the spiritual gifts of grace and peace can come only from God. Grace is God's love in action, freely providing complete salvation to undeserving sinners through Jesus Christ, whereas peace, the result of such action, involves the consciousness of sins forgiven, the recognition of reconciliation with God.

3. We are bound. Or, "we ought."

To thank God. Upon hearing the good news of the spirituality of the church situated at Thessalonica (see p. 262), Paul, rather than feeling that he should take credit to himself for their spirituality, considered it to be solely a cause for returning thanks to God.

As it is meet. Or, "even as it is befitting" (see on 1 Cor. 16:4). In view of his previous request concerning the spiritual condition of the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 3:12), Paul felt it to be only just that he acknowledge the answer to his prayers.

Your faith groweth exceedingly. Paul had been anxious about his converts, and had prayed earnestly for the opportunity to visit them in order to strengthen them, and to build up that which was lacking in their faith (see 1 Thess. 3:10). This privilege had been denied him. And yet God, in His own good way, had so blessed them that abundant growth in faith had been made.

Charity. Gr. *agapē* (see on 1 Cor. 13:1). Not only had the faith of the Thessalonians grown, but their love for one another had overflowed, as it were, and was also increasing.

They doubtless had continual opportunity to help one another because of the perils and privations arising from repeated persecutions. This is high commendation indeed. But Paul does not mean to imply that there are no weaknesses in the church. On the contrary, he proceeds in the two following chapters to point out serious defects, but he wants all to know that he has confidence in their spiritual powers.

4. We ourselves. That is, Paul and his companions, not the Thessalonians, who could not rightly boast of their own record.

Glory. Gr. *kauchaomai*, "to boast," "to glory" (cf. on Rom. 5:2).

In the churches. Paul does not identify these churches by name, neither does he imply that *all* the Christians knew of the Thessalonians' excellent qualities. It is probable that he is referring to the local groups, such as those in Corinth and Berea. Later, in writing to the Corinthians, he boasted of the churches of Macedonia and urged that the Corinthians follow their Macedonian brethren's example in opening their hearts to the Spirit of God (see 2 Cor. 8).

Patience. Gr. *hupomonē* (see on Rom. 2:7; 5:3).

Faith. Gr. *pistis* (see on Rom. 3:3). To be of value, patience must be combined with faith; for without divine aid none can hope to succeed in his fight against the powers of darkness (Eph. 6:11–16). Merely stoical endurance is nowhere inculcated in Scripture, and sufferings in themselves are not to be coveted. It was not in his converts' sufferings that the apostle gloried, but in their steadfastness and faith.

Persecutions. see on ch. 3:3.

Tribulations. Gr. *thlipseis* (see on Rom. 2:9; 5:3). See 1 Thess. 3:4.

Endure. Gr. *anechomai*, originally, "to hold oneself erect," hence, "to sustain," "to bear," "to endure." The word should be translated "are enduring," implying that the believers were even then being persecuted.

5. A manifest token. Gr. *endeigma*, "evidence," "proof," "token" (cf. on Phil. 1:28, where a related word, *endeixis*, is used). It is not the persecutions and tribulations that are proof of the righteous judgment of God, but rather the attitude of the believers toward such affliction. Patient endurance and courageous faith under persecution, being the result of God's grace, are evidence of His present interest and care for the sufferers, and thus proof that He will finally reverse the injustices of the world (cf. Eccl. 3:16, 17).

Righteous judgment of God. This may be applied to God's interposition on behalf of His people (v. 6), and to the great judgment whose execution is portrayed in vs. 7–10 (see on Ps. 73:3–24; Rom. 2:5). The fortitude of the persecuted saints is to the wicked an omen of their own coming destruction (cf. on Phil. 1:28).

Counted worthy. The Christian is not of himself worthy of the kingdom of God, nor do sufferings necessarily make him so. There is nothing he can do to merit the kingdom of God (cf. on Eph. 2:8), but by God's forgiving grace he is *deemed* worthy (cf. on Rom. 6:23).

The kingdom of God. The expression, as here used, is generally considered synonymous with "heaven" (cf. on Matt. 4:17).

Ye also suffer. Or, "you, too, are suffering." Paul realizes that the apostles are not the only sufferers, but that the Thessalonians even then were enduring persecution for the kingdom's sake.

6. A righteous thing. That is, a just thing from God's point of view. God sees not as man sees, and is able to come to completely just decisions, since He knows all the facts and can discern the motives in men's hearts.

To recompense. Gr. *antapodidōmi*, literally, "to give back in return," hence, "to repay," "to requite." Principles of justice require that men be rewarded according to their works. Those who spurn the Saviour's atonement are without protection, and expose themselves to just retribution. Compare on Rom. 2:6; Gal. 6:7; Rev. 22:12.

Trouble. Gr. *thlibō*, "to press hard upon," "to afflict," the verb that corresponds to the noun *thlipsis*, "affliction," "tribulation" (see on v. 4). Those who afflict the Thessalonians are not here identified, but from the narrative in Acts (ch. 17:5–9) it is clear that the Jews were the instigators of the persecution.

7. Rest. Gr. *anesis*, "a loosening," "relaxing," "relief," hence, "rest." It should be noted that the word "rest" is here a noun, not a verb, as the KJV may seem to imply. Paul is contrasting the rewards of the persecutors and the persecuted. Persecutors will receive the tribulation they have meted out to others, whereas the persecuted will gain what they have longed for, that is, "rest." The value of this "rest" is heightened by the knowledge that it will be enjoyed in company with the apostles. Converts and evangelists will triumph together. What an incentive to steadfastness this must have been to the persecuted Thessalonians!

Shall be revealed. The clause may be literally translated, "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus." The word used for "revelation" (*apokalupsis*) means "an unveiling," "uncovering," or "revealing" (see on 1 Cor. 1:7; Rev. 1:1). Paul identifies with the second advent of their Lord in glory the finding of rest by the believers. At that time recompense will be given to the righteous and the living wicked (see Additional Notes on Rev. 20, Note 2).

With his mighty angels. Compare on Matt. 25:31; Jude 14.

8. In flaming fire. This phrase should probably be attached to v. 7, as further describing the coming of Christ. The context and the general teaching of Scripture seem to support this. At the great advent day the Lord will be revealed in His own glory, with the glory of His Father, and of the holy angels (see Luke 9:26). Such glory appears to mortal eyes as fire. Thus Moses described the glory of God (Ex. 3:2), and thus, Ezekiel (Eze. 1:27), Daniel (Dan. 7:9, 10) and John the revelator (Rev. 1:14, 15).

Vengeance. Gr. *ekdikēsis* (see on Rom. 12:19). The phrase may be translated, "inflicting punishment."

Know not God. Paul conceives those whom the Lord punishes as belonging to two classes, those who know not God and those who obey not the gospel. Some interpret these classes as the Gentiles and the Jews respectively (cf. Jer. 10:25; Rom. 10:16), but it seems better to think of them as two general classes of people. The first are those who have had opportunity to know God but have spurned the privilege (see Ps. 19:1–3; Rom. 1:18–21). The second class are those who know the gospel message but have refused to obey it. Their reasons for rejecting the gospel are clearly shown by the Lord Himself to be their love of sin (see John 3:17–20).

9. Everlasting destruction. Gr. *olethros aiōnios*. For the meaning of *olethros* see on 1 Thess. 5:3; for the significance of *aiōnios* see on Matt. 25:41. The juxtaposition of the two words accurately describes the eventual fate of those who reject the Lord's mercies. All such will finally be destroyed, not temporarily, with a resurrection later, but with a destruction from which there will be no awakening. Paul's words preclude any idea of eternal torment (see on Matt. 3:12; 5:22).

From the presence of the Lord. Literally, "from the face of the Lord." The phrase conveys the thought of separation from the Lord. Just as the summit of bliss for the righteous is to dwell in the presence of the Lord (Matt. 5:8; Rev. 22:4), so, at the other end of the scale, the worst part of the punishment of the wicked will be their exclusion from the divine presence. On earth, they have spurned their opportunities to know the Lord (cf. on 2 Thess. 1:8), but at the end, when it is too late, they will realize the value of the privileges they have rejected.

It should be noted that Paul is not distinguishing between the comings of Christ before and after the millennium, but is comprehending the two as one grand event. The death of the wicked at the beginning of the millennium is followed, a thousand years later, by their resurrection, when they will be cast into the lake of fire and burned up (see Mal. 4:1–3; see on Rev. 20:5, 15). Since Paul is speaking of "everlasting destruction," it is not correct to refer to this passage as evidence that the wicked are destroyed at the second coming of Christ (see on Rev. 20:3).

Glory of his power. Or, "glory of his might," that is, the glory that emanates from Christ's strength (see on John 1:14), which is manifested in His saving the saints and destroying the wicked.

10. When he shall come. The apostle again identifies the event around which his thoughts are revolving, namely, the coming of the Lord in glory (cf. v. 7).

Glorified in his saints. That is, to be glorified in the persons of His saints. The supreme vindication of Christ's ways will take place when the whole family of His saints is gathered together. Then the universe will see the value of His sacrifice and the success of the course He pursued. Thus the Saviour will be glorified (cf. Gal. 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:20; 2 Thess. 1:4). As the artist is glorified in his masterpiece, so Christ is glorified before the heavenly throng by His handiwork—the miracles of His grace (see Matt. 13:43; TM 18, 49, 50). Throughout eternity glory will redound to the Saviour as His saints make known more fully the wisdom of God in His wondrous plan of salvation, which has been "realized in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10, 11, RSV).

Admired. Gr. *thaumazō*, "to wonder," "to wonder at," "to marvel"; in a secondary sense, "to admire." Both senses appear in the text. The saints have eagerly awaited their Deliverer, they have joyfully anticipated His appearing, but the realization of their expectations far exceeds their most sanguine hopes. They never dreamed their Lord could be so glorious. When the beauty of His presence has dawned upon them, to their wonder is added a reverent admiration (see Isa. 25:9).

In all. Or, "by all."

That believe. Literally, "who have believed," or "who have fixed their faith." It is those who fixed their faith *before* Christ's coming who are saved "in that day." It is those who have already accepted their Lord by faith, and who have endured to the end, who will be saved when Jesus returns (Matt. 24:13). Paul particularly had in mind his

Thessalonian converts and their initial act of belief in the gospel, as is made clear from the parenthetical expression "because our testimony among you was believed." They had become transformed as they accepted the message of salvation, and were assured that, if they were faithful, they would also be among the saints. But the phrase "all them that believe" also applies to all faithful believers.

Our testimony. The apostles bore witness to the great truths of the gospel (Acts 1:8; 2:32; 8:25; 1 John 1:1, 2). They did not preach abstract discussions, finespun theories, or "cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16). Rather, their preaching was the testimony of eyewitnesses. These truths they knew experimentally, and they urged the acceptance of a way of life which they themselves lived. Such preaching always has power.

In that day. Ambiguity is avoided if this phrase appears earlier in the verse, after "when he shall come," or following "his saints." For comment on "that day" see on Acts 2:20; cf. on Phil. 1:6.

11. We pray always. Compare 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; see on Phil. 1:4.

Count you worthy. See on v. 5, where Paul implies that the Thessalonians' manner of enduring persecution commends them to God. Here he prays that God would count, or "make" (RSV), them worthy of His calling.

This calling. Rather, "the calling." See on Rom. 8:28, 30; 2 Tim. 1:9. The calling is to a holy life, to come out of the world and to be separate (2 Cor. 6:17, 18), to be citizens of the heavenly kingdom (Phil. 3:20, RSV). We may well ask, "Does my life conform to the divine purpose of the One who so graciously calls? Will the Judge count me worthy?"

Good pleasure of his goodness. Gr. *eudokia agathosunēs*, literally, "good pleasure of goodness," there being no word for "his" in the Greek text. *Eudokia* means "good will," "wish," "desire." *Agathōsunē*, a word used only by Biblical and ecclesiastical writers, denotes uprightness of heart and life. But it is not God's goodness that is spoken of, but rather every "good desire" on the part of God's people. Paul prayed that God would "fulfil," that is, fill to the full, or completely bring to pass, every aspiration for goodness felt by his converts. It is God who by His Spirit puts into our hearts the desire to do His "good pleasure" (*eudokia*), and by the same Spirit gives us enabling power to carry out such desire (see Phil. 2:13; 1 Thess. 5:24). Moral goodness is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

The work of faith. The passage may be rendered, "every good resolve and every work inspired by faith." The kind of faith that Paul desires to see in the lives of God's people is not mere theoretical belief, but an active, working principle (cf. James 2:17). He recognized that such living, energizing faith was inspired by God and His Spirit (see 1 Thess. 1:3, 5). Consequently, he earnestly pleaded that God would enable His people to overcome human hindrances and perfect the work of faith in their lives (cf. Rom. 4:20, 21).

With power. Or, "in power," the words being construed with the verb "fulfil" as follows, "God would … fulfil in power."

12. That the name. The final purpose in Paul's prayer was that the Thessalonians' lives should bring glory to the name of Jesus. For comment on the significance of the "name" see on Acts 3:6; Phil. 2:9.

Glorified. We glorify that name when we demonstrate the saving power of His grace in our lives. This glorification is mutual; for as we glorify Him, He gives us of His glory by perfecting in us His character (see John 17:10, 22).

Grace. Again Paul recognizes that the believer can of himself do no good thing (cf. on John 15:5; Rom. 7:18), and that goodness can come only through the operation of divine grace in the Christian's life.

Our God and the Lord. The Greek permits the translation, "our God and Lord, Jesus Christ" (see on Rom. 9:5). But in 1 Thess. 2:2, Paul speaks of "our God" without reference to Christ; so it is possible that here he is also referring to the Father and the Son.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4 AA 264
7, 8 PP 339
7–9AA 264
7–10LS 51; 1T 41
8 GC 424; 5T 15
9 2T 396
10 9T 285
11 Ed 134; MB 110
11, 12 AA 265

CHAPTER 2

1 *He willeth them to continue stedfast in the truth received,* 3 *sheweth that there shall be a departure from the faith,* 9 *and a discovery of antichrist, before the day of the Lord come*. 15 *And thereupon repeateth his former exhortation, and prayeth for them*.

1. We beseech you. It appears that erroneous ideas concerning Paul's teaching about the nearness of Christ's coming were being circulated in the church at Thessalonica. To correct these misconceptions Paul wrote the second epistle. He handles the matter with great tact, addressing his readers, not as inferiors, but as brethren, and begs them to heed the instruction he is about to give. He desires to encourage, not discourage, the fainthearted.

By. Rather, "concerning," or "on behalf of the coming."

Coming. Gr. *parousia* (see on Matt. 24:3). Paul's argument in vs. 1–12 revolves around the theme of Christ's return.

Our gathering together. One of the paramount purposes of Christ's return is to gather together His elect (see on Matt. 24:31; John 14:3) that they may "ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). Paul invokes the prospect of this event to focus the Thessalonians' thoughts on his topic, and to solemnize their thinking.

2. Shaken in mind. The Thessalonians were not to be driven from their anchorage of settled conviction, and "carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14). Christians must be intellectually steadfast.

Troubled. Gr. *throeō*, "to cry aloud," "to frighten," hence, "to trouble." Here the word refers to a state of agitation or nervous excitement. The thought that the coming of the Lord was imminent had been keeping the Thessalonians in a state of continuous alarm.

Spirit. Here doubtless signifying the Spirit of prophecy (cf. on 1 Cor. 7:40; 12:10).

Word. That is, oral teaching.

Letter. That is, a written communication.

As from us. This phrase may be understood as applying to all three types of communication, in which case all had allegedly come from Paul. Many interpreters consider that Paul is here referring to some communication forged in his name. It is possible that Paul had forged writings in mind, especially in the light of the precaution that he took to sign the letter with his own hand (see on ch. 3:17). Others believe that if such were the case, he would probably have dealt more forcefully with the question. They suggest that it is more likely that some actual utterance of Paul in teaching, or in formal address, or in the writing of his first epistle was being misconstrued (see on 1 Thess. 4:15, 17; 2 Thess. 2:1; cf. AA 264).

The day of Christ. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "the day of the Lord." For comment on "the day of the Lord" see on Acts 2:20.

Is at hand. Gr. *enistēmi*, "to stand near," "to be impending," or in the form here found "to have arrived," "to have set in." *Enestōs* is translated "present" in Gal. 1:4. Paul had emphasized in his first epistle, as had Lord in His teachings, that Christians should be living in a state of preparedness for the Lord's return (Matt. 24:42, 44, 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:23). They are to watch and be ready, but they are never to be so imbued with a sense of the second advent's immediacy as to be in a state of unreasonable agitation.

3. Let no man. The apostle recognizes that the danger of deception is real and grave (cf. Matt. 24:4). The anticipated methods of deceit are many, and Paul does not attempt to limit them to the three mentioned in 2 Thess. 2:2, but allows for "any means." The enemy of the church will use signs and apparent miracles to lead the unwary into accepting the great delusion, or lie (vs. 9–11). Hence, God's people should beware of being led astray. Their faith must stand upon the plain statements of God's Word.

That day shall not come. These words are validly supplied to complete the thought. What is not to come until Anti-christ's revealing is obviously Christ's gathering of His own, about which the Thessalonians were troubled (v. 1).

A falling away. Gr. *hē apostasia*, "the falling away," or "the apostasy." *Apostasia* occurs in the NT only here and in Acts 21:21. The article (*hē*) indicates that a definite apostasy is referred to, and implies that this falling away is something well known to the readers. Paul himself had doubtless given oral instruction to the Thessalonians concerning the coming apostasy. In his address to the elders of the Ephesian church some years later he predicted that the apostasy would be due to men within the church arising "to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). He warned Timothy of similar dangers, adding that a time was coming when men would turn to fables, closing their ears to the truth (1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4). Peter and Jude speak with searing words about those who have forsaken the right way (2 Peter 2:1, 12–22; Jude 4, 10–13). And John testifies that, at his time of writing, many antichrists have come (1 John 2:18). The Lord Himself urged His followers to beware of false prophets (Matt. 7:15; 24:24), and predicted that many would be offended (Matt. 24:10). The form of the apostasy is not specifically defined by Paul at this juncture, but can be inferred from the above-mentioned scriptures. This much, however, is clear: (1) The apostasy is a religious matter, a spiritual rebellion, having no prime connection with politics. (2) The falling away is still future at the time of Paul's writing. (3) The apostasy was not only to precede the second advent (2 Thess. 2:2),

it would serve as a sign of the nearness of Christ's return; hence the Lord's coming should not be expected without the prior apostasy. The prophecy concerning the falling away was partially fulfilled in Paul's day, and much more so during the Dark Ages, but its complete fulfillment occurs in the days immediately prior to the return of Jesus (cf. Additional Note on Rom. 13). See Vol. VI, pp. 64–67.

That man of sin. That is, the man whose distinguishing characteristic is sin. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading "the man of the lawlessness" (cf. on v. 8, where "that Wicked" is literally, "the lawless one"). The presence of the definite article (here translated "that") indicates that Paul is referring to an enemy about whom he had already spoken to the Thessalonians, and that he expects them to know of whom he is writing. That he employs the Greek word for "man" (*anthrōpos*) further indicates a definite person or power. For comment on the identity of that person or power see on v. 4.

Revealed. Gr. *apokaluptō*, "to uncover," "to unveil," "to disclose," "to make known," (cf. on Rev. 1:1). The same verb is repeated in 2 Thess. 2:6, 8, and is used elsewhere in the NT of supernatural revelations (cf. Matt. 16:17; Luke 10:22; etc.) and particularly of the appearing of Christ (cf. Luke 17:30. The noun form, *apokalupsis*, "revelation," occurs in 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 4:13). This would suggest that the revelation of the "man of sin" may involve supernatural elements, and that his area of operation may be distinctly religious in character. That the "man of sin" is going to be "revealed" implies that he will be hidden until a certain moment when he will be manifested to the world, from which he has hitherto been concealed, or he will lay aside his disguise and appear in his true colors, or the disguise will be torn from him and his true nature be made known to earth's inhabitants.

The son of perdition. Or, "son of destruction," that is, a son destined to destruction. This is another title or description of the "man of sin." There is only one other place in Scripture where this appellation is used. There it is applied by the Saviour to Judas (see on John 17:12), an apostle, once a companion and equal of the other disciples, but one who so allowed Satan to enter into his heart (John 13:2, 27) that he betrayed his Lord (Matt. 26:47–50).

4. Opposeth. Gr. *antikeimai*, "to be adverse to," "to withstand," "to oppose."

Exalteth. Gr. *huperairomai*, "to lift [oneself] above," "to raise [oneself] up over" something.

Above. Or, "against."

All that is called God. This rightly includes all forms of deity, both true and false, and should not be limited to the Christian's God.

That is worshipped. Gr. *sebasma*, "an object of worship," "whatever is religiously honored." Paul's words depict an arrogant power that opposes all competitors in the filed of religion and permits no rival to receive the worship he claims for himself.

So that. These words serve to indicate the purpose of the actions of the haughty power.

As God. Important textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of these words. Such omission does not seriously affect the meaning of the related passage, since

the thought is implicit in the words that follow. The overbearing power assumes divine prerogatives, with reference to the true God and not simply pagan deities.

In. Literally, "into," indicating both the entrance of this power into the temple of God and his seating himself there.

Temple. Gr. *naos*, the inner sanctuary, or shrine, contrasted with *hieron*, which designates the entire temple complex. Some, on the basis of 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21, believe that "temple" here refers to the church; others, that Paul is using the term temple figuratively to represent a center of religious worship. In a place presumably dedicated to the worship of the true God the wicked one sits soliciting worship of himself.

Shewing himself. Gr. *apodeiknumi*, "to point out," "to exhibit," "to declare." His taking his seat in the inner sanctuary of the temple reveals that he claims to sit "as God," that, indeed, "he is God." Blasphemy can go no further.

To informed students of the Bible, the marks of identity enumerated in vs. 3, 4 are already familiar, since they are found elsewhere in the Inspired Word. A comparison with Daniel's prophecy of the blasphemous power that succeeds that of pagan Rome (see on Dan. 7:8, 19–26), and with John's word picture of the leopardlike beast (see on Rev. 13:1–18), reveals many similarities between the three descriptions. This leads to the conclusion that Daniel, Paul, and John are speaking of the same power, namely, the papacy (GC 49–54, 356). Many commentators apply the term Antichrist, "one who opposes Christ," or "one who stands in the place of Christ" (cf. on 1 John 2:18), to the power here described. For extended comment on the various marks of identity see on the above-mentioned passages in Daniel and in Revelation.

In a larger sense the power here described may be identified with Satan, who has long striven to be "like the most High" (see on Isa. 14:14). "Satan is working to the utmost to make himself as God and to destroy all who oppose his power. And today the world is bowing before him. His power is received as the power of God" (6T 14). "The determination of antichrist to carry out the rebellion he began in heaven will continue to work in the children of disobedience" (9T 230). "In this age antichrist will appear as the true Christ, and then the law of God will be fully made void. … But the true leader of all this rebellion is Satan clothed as an angel of light. Men will be deceived and will exalt him to the place of God, and deify him" (TM 62). "The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight" (GC 593).

5. Remember ye not? In his two epistles to the Thessalonians the apostle frequently appeals to his former oral instruction (cf. 1 Thess. 2:1, 9, 11, 13; 3:4; 4:1; 5:1, 2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:10).

I told you. Rather, "I used to tell you," as indicated by the Greek. It is unlikely that so conscientious a teacher as Paul would have failed to instruct his converts in so important a topic. That he can freely remind his readers of his former teaching shows that his vies concerning the coming of Christ had undergone no change, and that he had not previously expected the Lord's immediate appearing. At the same time, his written words are carefully framed, possibly with a view to avoiding political complications should his letter fall into opponents' hands.

6. And now ye know. Paul is again reminding his readers of a subject on which they were at least partially informed. Later students of his words have the disadvantage of not knowing the full content of his oral instruction.

Withholdeth. Gr. *katechō*, "to detain," "to hold back," "to restrain." The phrase is, literally, "the restraining thing," or "the withholding thing," being of neuter gender in the Greek. In v. 7 Paul uses a similar expression, but employs the masculine gender, "the withholding one," or "he who withholds."

Commentators recognize great difficulties in vs. 6–12, and trace those difficulties to the fact that Paul is addressing the Thessalonians against a background of previously imparted information, which we do not now possess. Thus any explanation of the passage that is advanced contains an element of conjecture, and must be carefully weighed against the context of Paul's message to the Thessalonians.

Some hold that the restraining power is the Roman Empire. Pagan persecutions held in check the tendency of the church to adopt heathen customs and beliefs, and thus held back the appearance of the papacy (GC 49). Probably Paul does not here identify the restraining power because he is dealing with a delicate question on which he dare not be more explicit for fear of bringing further persecution upon his converts should his letter fall into enemy hands.

Others see a wider application of the phrase. They believe that the masculine form "he who withholds" (see above) refers to God. In such a case "what withholdeth" could be regarded as a reference to the circumstances arranged and permitted by God (cf. on Dan. 4:17) to delay the manifestation of the Antichrist, both in his historical aspect and in his final manifestation yet to come (see on 2 Thess. 2:4). For the manner in which God keeps the powers of evil in check see on Rev. 7:1.

That he might be revealed. Although Paul does not specifically identify the "he," the context makes it clear that he is still speaking of the "man of sin" (vs. 3, 4). For comment on "revealed" see on v. 3.

In his time. Or, "in his season," that is, in the time or season appointed by God, not in a time determined by the "man of sin" himself. The Antichrist will be manifested when the proper time comes. When applied to the historical papacy (see on v. 4) this has been understood to refer to the 1260-year period of domination of that religious power (see on Dan. 7:25; Rev. 12:6). When given the wider application (see on 2 Thess. 2:4) the passage is viewed as referring also to the time when Satan will play a personal role in last-day events only to have his carefully laid scheme for world domination unveiled and its true nature become apparent (see on 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 17:16).

7. Mystery of iniquity. Gr. *mustērion tēs anomias*. For the significance of *mustērion*, as something hidden, see on Rom. 11:25; for *anomias*, "contempt and violation of law," "iniquity," see above on "that man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3). The title refers to a power that is characterized by lawlessness. The reference to law is particularly significant in view of the attempt to change the law referred to in Dan. 7:25 (see comment there). In the last analysis, this description applies to Satan, the author of lawlessness (TM 365), but the devil has generally camouflaged his personality by working through agents. In the last days he will personally play a more direct role, culminating his deception by personally counterfeiting the coming of Christ (see on 2 Thess. 2:4, 9).

Work. Gr. *energeō* (see on Phil. 2:13). Paul is referring to an agency already operating. In Paul's day the apostasy had begun (see on 2 Thess. 2:3). As time passed, that apostasy took the form of papal pretensions, so that, from a modern historical point of view, "the mystery of iniquity" can be identified with the papal power (GC 49–55).

Hence the "man of sin" and "the mystery of iniquity" may be considered as representing the same apostate papal power (GC 356); and behind all human manifestations of iniquity stands Satan himself, who in the end will play a personal role in an effort to lead the whole world captive (see on vs. 4, 9).

Only. This word introduces the element that delimits the operation of the mystery of iniquity.

Letteth. Gr. *katechō* (see on v. 6). In Old English "let" meant "to restrain." Most commentators agree that the Greek construction calls for the addition of an explanatory phrase such as "will restrain," in order to complete the thought of the sentence. Some believe that the Roman Empire is referred to here as in v. 6; others, that God is the restrainer (see on v. 6).

Taken out of the way. Or, "out of the midst is taken." Those who hold that the restraining power is the Roman Empire (see above on "letteth") believe that it is this power that is taken away. Those who hold that God is the restrainer paraphrase the second half of the verse thus: "The Restrainer, God, who holds the evil in check [GC 589, 614], will continue to restrain, until the time comes for the mystery of iniquity to be 'revealed' [v. 8] and 'taken out of the way.'" Such commentators regard this phrase as assuring the believer that, in spite of the operation of the apostate power, it will not continue forever. God will, in His appointed time, bring its activities to an end (see on Matt. 24:21, 22).

8. Then. Those who hold that the one "taken out of the way" (v. 7) is the Roman Empire understand "then" to refer to the time that papal Rome ascended to power (see on Dan. 7:8). Those who hold that the one "taken out of the way" is the Antichrist (see below on "that Wicked"), believe that "then" applies to the time still future, when the papacy will experience a brief period of revival (see on Rev. 13:3), following which its true nature will be exposed (see on Rev. 17:16, 17), or, in a wider application, to the time when Satan, the supreme Antichrist, takes a personal part in last-day affairs, only to have the falsity of his claims to deity exposed (see on 2 Thess. 2:4).

It should be remembered that the apostle is not attempting to give a complete doctrinal outline of last-day events, but is seeking only to provide the Thessalonians with such prophetic information as will keep them from being deceived concerning the time of the Saviour's return. We, therefore, should not expect a complete chronology of events that precede "the day of Christ."

That Wicked. Gr. *ho anomos*, literally, "the [one] destitute of law," hence, "the violator of the law," "the lawless one," or "the wicked one." The reference is to the "man of sin" (v. 3), or the "mystery of iniquity" (v. 7). According to one view "the lawless one" is the papacy (see on v. 4; cf. GC 356, 579). According to a second view, he is not only the papacy, but more importantly, Satan himself, the supreme Antichrist, as he impersonates Christ just before the last day (see on vs. 4, 9).

Revealed. Gr. *apokaluptō* (see on v. 3). Applied to the papacy this would refer to its assumption of power following the decline of the Roman Empire. The reference could also be to the time yet future when the papal power will be revived (see on Rev. 13:8), and to the time when following this brief period of revival the true nature of the system will be unveiled, or exposed (see on Rev. 17:16, 17).

Applied to Satan, the revealing, or unveiling, would refer to his attempted counterfeit of the coming of Christ (see on v. 9).

The Lord. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between this and the reading "the Lord Jesus," a reading that harmonizes with the context, which speaks of Christ's glorious return.

Shall consume. Gr. *analiskō*, "to expand," "to use up," "to consume," "to destroy." Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) between *analiskō* and the reading *anaireō*, "to take away," "to abolish," "to put out of the way," "to slay." See below on "shall destroy."

Spirit of his mouth. That is, the breath of his mouth (cf. on Luke 8:55; Rev. 19:15). There may be an allusion here to the wording of Isa. 11:4.

Shall destroy. Gr. *katargeō*, "to make idle," hence, "to render null and void" (see on Rom. 3:3). This latter meaning fits well into the picture of the fate that awaits the papacy or, more basically, Satan at Christ's second coming (cf. on Rev. 20:1–6). The papacy ceases to exist, and Satan's carefully laid scheme collapses.

The words of this verse have sometimes been used to describe the destruction of the wicked at the second coming of Christ. It is true that the wicked living at that time will suddenly be slain, but Paul is here dealing with the fate of "that Wicked," "the wicked one," not with that of the wicked in general.

Brightness. Gr. *epiphaneia*, "an appearing," "an appearance," a word that was often used in classical Greek to describe the glorious appearing of the pagan gods. In the NT it is exclusively used for the glorious advents of the Lord Jesus, both the first (2 Tim. 1:10) and the second (1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13).

Coming. Gr. *parousia*, the word generally used for Christ's second coming (cf. on 2 Thess. 2:1; see on Matt. 24:3).

9. Whose. The reference is to "that Wicked," "the lawless one" (v. 8).

Coming. Gr. *parousia*, the same word used for Christ's coming (see on v. 8) Because of (1) the quasi-technical force of the term *parousia*, (2) the frequent use of the term to describe the second advent of Christ, and (3) the juxtaposition of *parousia* here with the same word in v. 8, many hold that the apostle is referring to Satan's spurious imitation of our Lord's own glorious coming. For the fact that Satan will have a *parousia* see GC 593, 624, 625; 5T 698; 8T 27, 28. We may be thankful that God's Word provides clear descriptions of Christ's coming, so that believers may not be deceived. The Lord Himself will "descend from heaven" (1 Thess. 4:16) "with clouds" (Rev. 1:7), "in like manner as" His disciples saw Him "go into heaven" (Acts 1:11), and His coming will be "as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west" (Matt. 24:27), hence, "every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1:7). It will not be possible for Satan accurately and completely to counterfeit such a *parousia* (see GC 625). God's own people will, by diligent study of the Scriptures, and by reminding themselves of prophetic details concerning the genuine second advent, be able to escape the devil's deception (see on Matt. 24:24).

After. Gr. *kata*, "according to," "in conformity with" (cf. 8T 226).

Working of Satan. That is, according to Satan's method of operating.

Power … signs … lying wonders. The word "lying," literally, "of a lie," applies also to "power" and "signs." The same words, "power," "signs," "wonders," are used of the miracles of Jesus (see Vol. V, p. 208). But the Lord's marvelous works were genuine, and were signs attesting His divine nature (see John 10:25, 37, 38). Miracles involving creative acts are, of course, beyond Satan's power. It is recorded, however, that Satan has the power to bind men in physical infirmity (see Luke 13:16). Evidently, then, he has power to release them when it suits his purposes. Wonderful works of apparent healing, outwardly identical in character with those performed by Christ, will be performed by Satan and his agents (GC 588, 589, 593; TM 365; 5T 698; 9T 16). Marvelous acts and spiritualistic manifestations of supernatural power will be used in Satan's final attempt to deceive the world.

10. All deceivableness of unrighteousness. That is, all deceit that comes from unrighteousness. This further identifies the nature of the counterfeit by laying bare its purpose (to deceive) and origin (unrighteousness).

In them that perish. Literally, "to [or, "for"] the perishing ones," or "for them that are perishing." The same Greek phrase occurs in 2 Cor. 2:15; 4:3. Satan succeeds in deceiving the unredeemed. The elect will not be deceived (cf. Matt. 24:23–27).

Received. Gr. *dechomai*, "to receive with favor," "to welcome" (see on 2 Cor. 6:1). Paul here puts his finger on the reason why the unbelievers will be deceived. They had had an opportunity to love the truth, but had spurned that privilege.

The love of the truth. The unregenerate not only reject truth but even refuse to entertain a love for truth, that is, they hate truth. This attitude does not concern truth in the abstract, but "the truth," the one great truth that comes from God, which is embodied in Christ Jesus. Final condemnation of sinners will be based on their rejection of Jesus, who is "the truth" (John 14:6). Their refusal to cherish a love for what is true makes them susceptible to being influenced by all that is deceitful, by all the machinations of the wicked one.

Might be saved. Just as rejection of the truth which is in Christ Jesus spells death, so its acceptance brings life unto eternal salvation.

11. For this cause. Or, "because of this," that is, because of the unbelievers' refusal to love and believe the truth. What follows is a result of their obdurate attitude.

God shall send. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "God sends"; that is, at the same time the "Wicked" one is flooding the world with his deceits (vs. 8–10). At the final stage in world history here forecast, the unregenerate have clearly chosen lies in preference to truth, and have placed themselves beyond redemption. God therefore abandons them to the course of their choosing (see on Rom. 1:18, 24). In the Scriptures God is often said to do that which He does not prevent (see on 1 Sam. 16:14; 2 Chron. 18:18).

Strong delusion. Literally, "a working of error" (cf. on v. 9), that is, an operation that leads to the final error that results in irrevocable condemnation.

A lie. Rather, "the lie," that is, the crowning deception, when Satan impersonates Christ. There can be no worse lie than this, that the author of evil should pose as Christ, the Source of truth. Those who are deluded into thinking Satan to be Jesus are beyond redemption.

12. Might be damned. Gr. *krinō*, "to judge." The result of such judgment is to be inferred from the context, not from the word *krinō* (see on Rom. 2:2).

Believed not the truth. A negative definition of those who, in v. 11, are said to believe literally, "the lie," as in v. 10 they are said to receive not the love of the truth.

But had pleasure. That is, they found their pleasure in unrighteousness or iniquity. This is the inspired analysis of the mentality of those who are lost: they preferred sin to righteousness, they enjoyed doing what was wrong rather than doing what was right.

13. Bound to give thanks. Compare on ch. 1:3. A transition takes place here. Having completed his discourse on the "man of sin" and the "Wicked" one (vs. 1–12), the apostle thinks of the wonderful provision God has made in the gospel so that none need be deceived and lost. He is also encouraging his readers after presenting the somber picture found in vs. 1–12.

Beloved of the Lord. Compare on 1 Thess. 1:4, where the converts are described, literally, as "beloved of God."

From the beginning. Textual evidence may also be cited (cf. p. 10) for the reading "first fruits," or "first converts" (RSV, margin), but the KJV rendering is to be preferred as possibly meaning "from eternity" (cf. 1 John 1:1; 2:13). Paul is reminding his readers that God had chosen them "from the beginning." This is parallel to the thought expressed in other epistles (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9). Compare on Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:11; 1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8; cf. DA 22).

Chosen you. Compare on Eph. 1:4; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 5:9. That this choice is not an arbitrary choice on God's part is shown by the qualifying words that follow. The choice is contingent upon the sanctification of the chosen ones.

Through sanctification of the Spirit. Or, "in sanctification of spirit." It is recognized, however, that all true sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. on 1 Peter 1:2). Such sanctification, together with "belief of the truth," is the means through which salvation is effected in the believer's life.

Belief of the truth. This stands in striking opposition to belief of, literally, "the lie" (v. 11), which results from falling victim to the deceptions of Antichrist.

14. Whereunto he called you. This clearly shows that the previous verse does not teach the predestination of some to salvation, and others to damnation (see on 1 Thess. 1:4). Because He purposes to save men, irrespective of race, God has inspired Paul with a burning desire and determination to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The call, bringing the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ, was freely proclaimed. Its acceptance or rejection depended upon the individual. Those who believed and accepted the call were being transformed by the Holy Spirit. See on Rom. 8:28–30.

Our gospel. See on 1 Thess. 1:5.

Obtaining of the glory. This is the purpose of the gospel, that those who accept it may participate in the glory of Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 5:9). This "glory" may refer to the beauty of Christ's character, in which all the redeemed will share (see on 1 John 3:2), and to the glory of Christ's eternal kingdom (see on John 1:14; Rom. 8:17, 30).

15. Therefore, brethren. The Thessalonians had been discouraged by the misleading teachings concerning Christ's immediate return. Paul's instruction was specifically designed to encourage them. For the apostle's frequent use of "brethren" see on 1 Thess. 1:4.

Stand fast. Gr. *stēkō* (see on Phil. 1:27). A correct understanding of the "blessed hope" is a great incentive to steadfastness of character (see on Titus 2:12, 13). Misunderstanding leads to agitation and possibly fanaticism (see on 2 Thess. 2:2).

Hold. Gr. *krateō*, "to hold fast," "to keep carefully" (cf. Mark 7:8; Heb. 4:14; Rev. 3:11).

Traditions. Gr. *paradoseis* (see on Mark 7:3). The word means things delivered, handed over, or transmitted by way of teaching or doctrine. The prominent idea of the word is one of authority above that of the teacher; therefore, here it refers to inspired messages received by Paul and his companions and faithfully passed on to the Thessalonians.

By word, or our epistle. The adjective "our" applies to "word" as well as to "epistle." Compare on v. 2. By these phrases Paul covers all sources of acceptable teaching. His phraseology also places these two forms of instruction on the same footing, as regards inspiration.

16. Now. Or, "but," as if Paul, having urged the believers to stand fast (v. 15), wishes to make clear that God is the only true source of stability.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Paul's usual custom is to mention the Father first, in address and in prayer (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1; 3:11; 2 Thess. 1:1, 2, 11, 12); but here he first names the Son (cf. 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 1:1). This order probably occurs because of the apostle's previous reference (2 Thess. 2:14) to "the glory of our Lord Jesus." This conjecture is supported by the Greek construction in which the word for "himself" has first, and therefore emphatic, place in the sentence.

Hath loved us. The verb is in the singular, and may be regarded as applying to both the Son and the Father. The close connection attests Paul's concept of the equal divinity of the Son with the Father. The form of the verb in the Greek shows that the author had a definite historical event in mind. He is referring to God's unique act of love in giving His Son a sacrifice for our sins, and the self-denying act of our Saviour in giving Himself (John 3:16; Titus 2:14). The apostle can cite no greater evidence than the cross as the supreme manifestation of God's love and the sure basis for comfort and hope.

Everlasting consolation. Gr. *paraklēsis aiōnion.* For *paraklēsis* see on Acts 9:31; for *aiōnion* see on Matt. 25:41. The consolation, or comfort, derived from the love of the Father and Son is not transitory, as earthly comfort so often is, but endures into eternity. Such a gift is well designed to cheer the fainthearted among the Thessalonians and to enable them to withstand any disturbing teachings concerning Christ's return (1 Thess. 5:11, 14; 2 Thess. 2:2). Fainthearted souls are not to be despised, but encouraged (see Rom. 14:1; Heb. 12:12).

Good hope through grace. Or, "good hope in grace." The hope (of redemption at Christ's coming) is "good" in the sense of being genuine and therefore reliable, in contrast with false hopes aroused by erroneous teachings about the immediacy of the Saviour's return. It is justifiably called "that blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). Like all God's gifts to men, it is bestowed freely, in accord with Heaven's abundant grace (cf. on Eph. 2:5, 8).

17. Comfort. Gr. *parakaleō* (see on Matt. 5:4). The verb is in the singular, as is that translated "stablish." The comforting and the stablishing come from both the Father and the Son (see on 2 Thess. 2:16).

You. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) the omission of this word, making the verb "stablish" applicable to "your hearts." Only divine power can truly stabilize the heart, hence Paul's prayer that Christ and God would do this for the Thessalonians.

Every good word and work. Textual evidence attests (cf. p. 10) a reversal of word order, giving the reading "every good work and word." The two nouns "work" and "word" represent the area in which God comforts and stabilizes the believers' hearts. The assured heart will direct the production of acceptable works and words.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 MYP 30
2–4AA 265
3 GC 50, 356, 443, 446, 453, 456; 9T 230
3, 4 GC 49, 571; LS 96; SR 326, 382; 1T 76
4 GC 53; MB 126; SR 330; 6T 14
5, 7 AA 266
7 AA 587; GC 49, 54, 384; SR 326, 330; 5T 712; 7T 166
7, 8 GC 356
7–128T 226
8 DA 108; GC 37, 321, 579, 657; 2T 173
8–121T 290
9 EW 91, 261, 262, 265, 266; GC x; PP 686; 1T 302
9, 10 COL 414; GC 553; PK 717; 1T 291; 2T 172; 5T 746; 8T 49
9–11GC 389, 444
9–12AA 266
10 ChS 158; FE 88; GC 560; MYP 59; 1T 294, 299; 3T 407; 4T 557, 576, 594; 5T 102, 366, 429; 7T 113; 8T 28, 49, 162; 9T 62
10, 11 GC 559; PP 55; SR 397; TM 365; 1T 73, 300, 301; 6T 401; 8T 298
10–12GC 431, 523; 8T 249
11, 12 EW 44, 45, 88; 2T 173; 4T 595; 5T 144
12 GC 390; 2T 455, 470
13 CT 22; FE 189
13–178T 226
14 DA 341
15–17AA 267

CHAPTER 3

1 *He craveth their prayers for himself,* 3 *testifieth what confidence he hath in them,* 5 *maketh request to God in their behalf,* 6 *giveth them divers precepts, especially to shun idleness, and ill company,* 16 *and last of all concludeth with prayer and salutation.*

1. Finally, brethren. Compare on Phil. 3:1; 1 Thess. 4:1. In this case the words introduce the conclusion to Paul's epistle.

Pray for us. The apostle has just recorded a prayer for his converts that they might be comforted and stablished (ch. 2:17). Now he begs them to remember him and his colleagues in return (cf. 2 Cor. 1:11; Phil. 1:19; 1 Thess. 5:25). He ever felt his own insufficiency, and was conscious of his need of divine power (see 2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5).

Word of the Lord. There was no selfish element in Paul's request for the Thessalonians' prayers. He was anxious only that God's word should prosper through the ministry of himself and his companions.

May have free course. Gr. *trechō*, "to run," here used metaphorically. It seems that the word of God in the city of Corinth was not "running" as freely as the apostle wished. It was probably encountering determined opposition from the Jews (see on 1 Thess. 3:7). It may well have been in answer to the united prayers of the Thessalonians that Paul was given an encouraging vision and was later delivered from a Jewish plot to cut short his work in that city (see Acts 18:9–17). He continued in Corinth for a year and a half, and established an important church. Under normal conditions the "word of the Lord," activated by the Holy Spirit, makes rapid progress. It is "quick, and powerful" (Heb. 4:12). It "runneth very swiftly" (Ps. 147:15). It grows and multiplies (Acts 12:24).

Be glorified. The word of the Lord is glorified in the transformed lives of those who are guided by it. The gospel is said to be adorned by the godly lives of even the humblest Christians—converted slaves, who would not pilfer, but who would be entirely honest and faithful in their service (2:9, 10; cf. on Matt. 5:16).

As it is with you. Paul recalled the joyous reception of the gospel by the Thessalonians and its effectual working in them (1 Thess. 2:13).

2. May be delivered. Gr. *ruomai*, "to rescue." Although this second request has a distinctly pesonal flavor, the apostle is not primarily concerned with his personal safety, but wants to make sure that his evangelistic team will be left free to pursue its godly work.

Unreasonable. Gr. *atopoi*, literally, "out of place," hence, "improper," "evil," "wrong." The Greek contains the definite article, implying that Paul is referring to a specific class of opponents, doubtless the Jews who unitedly attacked him and brought him before Gallio, the Roman governor (see on Acts 18:9–17). These Jews were more perverse than many heathen in that they stubbornly resisted the appeals to Holy Scripture and the miracles wrought by the Holy Spirit in demonstration of the power of God. Some of their kind went so far at times as to blaspheme (Acts 13:45).

All men have not faith. This is probably a reference to the unbelieving Jews who refused the faith, that is, the Christian faith. The Thessalonians had been prompt to believe, but they must not be surprised if this is not the case with all others. There are those who have given themselves over so completely to evil that their consciences are seared (1 Tim. 4:2). Some, by shutting their minds fully against the evidence brought home to their hearts by the Holy Spirit, place themselves beyond the reach of the gospel. When the Lord, through His marvelous works in the flesh, gave unmistakable evidence of His divinity, there were those who so steeled their hearts against belief in His Messiahship that they actually attributed His miracle-working power to Satan. Such, the Lord warned, were in danger of committing the unpardonable sin, if they had not already done so (see Matt. 12:22–32). Some who have not gone that far have been so hardened by secular pursuits that the gospel can no more enter their hearts than the good seed can take root in the soil of the trampled wayside (see Luke 8:5, 12). Such people need a breaking up of the ground of their hearts by sincere repentance, that they may take hold of the word and believe (see Hosea 10:12).

3. The Lord is faithful. With man's unfaithfulness, especially that of the Jews, who turned their backs on God's truth, is contrasted the invariable faithfulness of God (see on 1 Cor. 1:9). Paul could personally testify to the Lord's trustworthiness, because of the promise of deliverance and its fulfillment in Corinth (Acts 18:9–17).

Stablish. Gr. *stērizō*, "to confirm," "to establish," "to strengthen." Paul had already prayed that his converts might be established (ch. 2:17); now he expresses confidence that this will be done.

Keep you from evil. Literally, "guard you from the evil," or "guard you from the evil [one]." The reference may be to evil in general, or to Satan, the evil one (cf. Matt. 13:19, 38; Eph. 6:16, RSV; 1 John 2:13, 14; 3:12; 5:18, RSV). A reference to Satan is fitting in this epistle where Paul has brought into such prominence the work of Satan and his agents (see on 2 Thess. 2:3–12). The apostle assures his readers that the lord whom they serve will faithfully protect them even from the worst of enemies.

4. Confidence in the Lord. The thought of others' unfaithfulness brings Paul's mind back to the needs of the faithful Thessalonians. But, although the apostle is encouraging human believers, he makes it clear that the basis of his confidence is "in the Lord," and not in men (cf. Gal. 5:10).

Do and will do. Here we have an exhortation expressed in a winning way. Paul has definite commands for the Thessalonians, but tactfully expresses his conviction that they are already doing what he is requesting, and that they will continue to do so. His commands were from God. They had received them as such, and had been empowered by God's Spirit to fulfill them (see 1 Thess. 2:13). He believed that the Lord, who had begun a good work in their lives, would finish it and would prepare them for His glorious appearing (cf. Phil. 1:6).

The things. Not identified in this verse, but clearly listed in vs. 6–15.

5. Direct. Gr. *kateuthunō*, "to make straight." The word is part of Paul's petition—"may the Lord direct."

Hearts. Gr. *kardiai*, here used to include the mind, the seat of intelligence (cf. on Rom. 1:21; 10:10; Eph. 1:18). We need the continual guidance of the Lord in our thinking as well as in our emotions. He has promised to remind us of the truths we have been taught, to reveal their significance, and to guide us into a complete understanding of His will (see John 14:26; 16:13).

Into the love of God. This phrase defines the first of the two areas into which Paul wishes his readers' hearts to be directed. Two interpretations of the definition are possible: (1) That they may be led into love for God; (2) that they may come to possess, or to share in, God's love. Analogy with the phrase that follows makes the second alternative preferable.

Patient waiting. Gr. *hupomonē* (see on Rom. 2:7; cf. on Heb. 12:1). The complete phrase reads literally, "patience of Christ," which may mean, the patience shown by Christ, or a Christlike fortitude. The context, however, makes it possible to apply the purpose of Paul's prayer to the particular matter of patiently awaiting the Saviour's return.

6. Now we command you. With this phrase Paul begins to record his explicit directives to the Thessalonians (cf. on v. 4). In his first epistle he had appealed to the church to warn the fanatical faction in their midst (1 Thess. 5:14). His appeal appears to

have been only partially successful, for he now resorts to stronger measures, and issues commands (cf. on 1 Thess. 4:2, 11).

Our. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of this word. For comment on the significance of the phrase, "In the name of our Lord," see on Acts 3:6; 1 Cor. 5:4. Paul invokes the Lord's name as support for the commands he himself is now giving to the believers (cf. on 1 Thess. 4:2; 2 Thess. 3:12).

Withdraw. Gr. *stellomai*, "to keep away," "to set oneself from," "to withdraw." This breaking off of intimate intercourse on the part of reliable church members was to bring the erring ones to their senses, in order that they might "be ashamed" (v. 14), and turn from their evil ways. It was a necessary step in church discipline (cf. Matt. 18:15–17), but it was not excommunication. That final act was reserved for more serious offenses (see on 1 Cor. 5:5).

Every brother. Paul's instruction is comprehensive; he wants all cases to be dealt with.

Disorderly. Gr. *ataktōs* (see on 1 Thess. 5:14).

Tradition. Gr. *paradosis* (see on ch. 2:15).

He received. Textual evidence favors (cf. p. 10) the reading "they received." Important textual evidence may be cited for the reading "ye received," and this has strong support from the context (v. 7).

7. For yourselves know. Compare similar phraseology in 1 Thess. 2:1, 2, 5; 3:3; 5:2.

Follow. Gr. *mimeomai*, "to imitate." Compare the use of the word in Heb. 13:7; 3 John 11. The instruction that Paul and his companions had given was not rendered confusing by inconsistency in their own lives. The Thessalonians had a worthy example set before them (cf. on 1 Cor. 4:16; Phil. 3:17). Paul could urge Christians to follow him because he followed Christ (see 1 Cor. 11:1). If they would think of Paul's humble, careful, Christlike conduct, they would know what the Lord required of them. Every minister should so live that his life will be consistent with his teaching.

Behaved not … disorderly. The disorderly behavior to which Paul was alluding (v. 6), seems to have been due to the fanatical idea that since the Lord was about to come, it was too late to continue worldly pursuits. Those who were imbued with this thought may have urged the principle of community of goods upon the church for selfish reasons, in order to profit from others' labor. Paul denounced these indolent agitators (v. 11), but first he reminded the brethren that his example had been a positive one. He was able boldly to appeal to his busy life among them.

8. For nought. Rather, "as a gift." Compare 2 Cor. 11:7–9, where Paul boasts of being no charge to the Corinthians.

Wrought. Or, "working."

Labour and travail. see on 1 Thess. 2:9. These words emphasize the extreme measures taken by Paul and his company to set a proper example before the people and to remove all possible grounds for criticism.

Night and day. see on 1 Thess. 2:9.

Be chargeable. Gr. *epibareō*, "to weigh down," "to be a burden." Paul did not wish to be a burden to the Thessalonians.

9. Power. Gr. *exousia*, "right" "authority," (see on John 1:12; Acts 1:7). The apostle wished to make it clear that he was not opposed to a church-supported ministry. Indeed, he elsewhere taught the definite obligation of the church to support those called by God to minister to them (see 1 Cor. 9:9–14). He appreciated the gifts sent for his support by the Philippians, and called such gifts an acceptable sacrifice, "wellpleasing to God" (Phil. 4:17, 18). But in Thessalonica he waived his right to church support in order to give the members a worthy example to follow.

Ensample. Gr. *tupos*, "type" (see on Rom. 5:14).

To follow. Gr. *mimeomai* (see on v. 7).

10. When we were with you. Compare on 1 Thess. 3:4; 2 Thess. 2:5.

We commanded you. The range of instruction given by Paul to the Thessalonians is amazing. In the short time he was with them he seems to have covered every vital topic, and to have turned his teaching to their immediate needs. Consequently, when absent from them, he was able to refer to the verbal commands he had given.

Would not work. Or, "is not willing to work." Paul is evidently referring to those who, anticipating the immediate return of Christ, were refusing to engage in normal labor, holding that it was unnecessary in view of the second coming.

Neither should he eat. The apostle succinctly opposes the reasoning of the fanatics with a terse saying that may have been current in his time or original with himself. His dictum also has present value. Work is a blessing; idleness, a curse (see DA 72; COL 359). God supplies food for the animals, but they have to search for it. Adam was told "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:19). The Saviour Himself, as "the carpenter," set us a worthy example (Mark 6:3). The Christian is to do everything in his power to keep from being a charge upon others. He should work so that, in addition to supporting himself, he is able to help the needy (Eph. 4:28).

11. For we hear. It would appear that Paul had received recent news from Thessalonica and was writing about a situation that was actually then in existence.

Some … among you. While the apostle makes the Thessalonians responsible for the situation in their church, he does not include them all in his condemnation, but recognizes that the trouble is limited to a few.

Disorderly. Gr. *ataktōs* (see on 1 Thess. 5:14).

Working not … busybodies. In the Greek there is an evident play upon words, which may be conveyed as, "not busy, but busybodies" (Wordsworth). Busybodies are busy in unimportant things, in those things which do not concern them, in everybody's business but their own. Honest toil is the best cure for such people; for those who are conscientious in the discharge of their own duties will not find time, nor have the inclination, to be meddling in the affairs of others (cf. on 1 Thess. 4:11; 1 Tim. 5:13, 14; 1 Peter 4:15). Tattling and evilspeaking are the stock in trade of busybodies. A double curse follows, falling more heavily upon the gossiper than upon those he maligns (see 5T 176, 241, 242, 609, 610; Ed 235).

12. By our Lord Jesus Christ. This tactful addition of an exhortation not only claims the Lord's authority but implies that those addressed are regarded as being within the fold. The apostle ever wants to hold all who will stay within the church, but he wishes also to ensure their living up to the established standards.

With quietness they work. Compare on 1 Thess. 4:11. The appeal is to a consistent, godly, quiet life of useful labor, in contrast with that of a meddling busybody. The true Christian goes about his duties in a quiet, unostentatious way, being diligent in business, serving the Lord (see Rom. 12:11). Thus, like Paul, he will strive not to be dependent upon anyone for his daily bread (cf. on v. 8).

13. Brethren, be not weary. Again the apostle addresses himself to the body of the church (see v. 6), including the faithful members who have not been led astray by the fanatical agitators. God's people are not to become weary or disheartened in well-doing, from pressure either within or without. Compare on Gal. 6:9, 10, where reference is to works of beneficence in behalf of the needy. The fact that there are slothful, improvident, undeserving ones who look to the church for its bounty, must not be allowed to dry up the springs of Christian generosity. The church needs the blessing that comes from helping its poor. It is a privilege to share our temporal blessings with those less fortunate, and thus be mutually helpful (see 2 Cor. 8:14; 9:7–12; 3T 525; 2T 24–26).

14. Obey not our word. Paul desired the church to realize that the epistle was authoritative. It was the inspired word of God, written in the name of the Lord. It required obedience. The members were to help to support its instructions.

Note. Gr. *sēmeioō*, "to mark," from *sēmeion*, "a sign," "a mark," "a token."

Have no company. Such deliberate ostracism on the part of loyal Christians could hardly fail to have a remedial effect. The delinquents would more readily see themselves as others saw them, and be ashamed. Being ashamed of their wayward conduct, they would be led to repentance, and be saved.

15. Not as an enemy. This word of caution is very needful in the church. It is easy for Christians to be harsh in their thinking toward a perverse brother.

As a brother. Paul did not want the erring one to be excommunicated. He wished him still to be counted as a brother, and to be admonished as such. If the discipline had its intended effect, he would be susceptible to brotherly counsel, and be ready to return to a balanced interpretation of truth. Such a course will not be easy for either side, but it is the ideal for which the church should strive.

16. Now the Lord of peace. In 1 Thess. 5:23 Paul speaks of "the … God of peace," referring to the Father, whose attributes the Son shares. In Isa. 9:6 the title "The Prince of Peace" is prophetically applied to the Messiah; in the Gospels Christ is shown bestowing peace upon His followers (John 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 26); in Eph. 2:14 Christ is described as "our peace." Paul recognizes that only such a Christ could bring true peace into the troubled hearts of the Thessalonians.

Always. The apostle desires his converts to enjoy Christ's peace at all times, no matter how trying conditions might become.

By all means. That is, in every needful way.

You all. In this prayer the apostle includes the whole Thessalonian church, the stubborn, unruly members no less than the most faithful. He wants the Lord's presence to abide continually with them all (cf. 1 Thess. 5:26; 2 Thess. 1:3; 3:18). The divine presence in the heart of each believer will be the best guarantee of peace in the church on earth, and the enjoyment of eternal peace in the world to come.

17. Salutation. Gr. *aspasmos* (see on Col 4:18; 1 Thess. 5:26). The reference is to the benediction (2 Thess. 3:18), but the greeting bears added significance, since it was written with Paul's own hand (cf. on 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; Philemon 19).

The personal autograph was not unusual in dictated letters, but it may have had special meaning in this epistle in view of the possible danger from forged letters (see on 2 Thess. 2:2). Even if no such danger existed, the sight of the personally written greeting would ensure an even more affectionate reception of the letter by the Thessalonians.

Token. Gr. ***sēmeion***, "sign" (see on Luke 2:34), referring not so much to the salutation as to the fact that it was written in Paul's own handwriting.

In every epistle. This shows that it was customary for Paul to autograph all of his writings, even though he did not expressly mention the fact in each letter.

18. The grace of our Lord. Compare Rom. 16:24. For the meaning of the phrase see on Rom. 1:7. Compare on 1 Thess. 5:28.

Amen. Textual evidence may be cited (cf. p. 10) for the omission of this ending.

The postscript appearing at the end of the epistle is not in any early manuscript. It is a later editorial addition, not part of the original inspired account (cf. on 1 Thess. 5:28). The place of writing was Corinth, not Athens (see pp. 261, 262).

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3–5AA 267
8 1T 447
8, 9 AA 347
10 COL 247; CS 122; WM 200
10–12AA 348
11 AA 261
12 AA 267
13 2T 445; 3T 210; 9T 220
15 AA 268
[1]

[1]Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment.* Commentary Reference Series (2 Th 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.